

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

University of Montana News Releases, 1928,
1956-present

University Relations

1-27-1981

Pengelly calls wildlife "Barometer of Culture"

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Pengelly calls wildlife "Barometer of Culture"" (1981). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 6586.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases/6586>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Relations at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.



Publications & Media Relations

(406) 243-2522 • University Hall • Missoula, Montana 59812

MEDIA RELEASE

IMMEDIATELY

holmquist/md
01-27-81
dailies + pics.

PENGELLY CALLS WILDLIFE "BAROMETER OF CULTURE"

by Cary E. Holmquist
UM Publications & Media Relations

MISSOULA--

"Wildlife is a barometer of culture: when wildlife is in good shape, the country is in good shape. Like the miner's canary, the animals are trying to tell us something. So when we (wildlife biologists) fight for good conditions for animals, we also are fighting for a livable environment for people."

If asked why wildlife is important, the above is one of the reasons you will be given by W. Leslie Pengelly, director of the University of Montana Wildlife Biology Program. Of course Professor Pengelly can cite many other reasons for studying and protecting wildlife and he has made a professional career of teaching and expounding those reasons, often with humor.

A prolific writer and public speaker, Pengelly's strong convictions have given him a national and international reputation as a wildlife authority and advocate. Despite the controversial aspects of his profession his students and most of his colleagues admire him with plenty of words of praise and commendation. One student called him a "highly self-confident person who usually can back up his statements with facts" which makes it difficult to argue against him.

Pengelly's philosophy on this subject can be summarized as, "if you never get anyone mad at you in your lifetime then you're probably not doing your job." Therein lies his provocative nature.

(over)

Pengelly-- add one

He has made very plain his feelings about the importance of wildlife, saying, for example, "Natural resources provide the foundation upon which our institutions rest, providing the base for civilization," and that "wildlife conservation is a moral responsibility of every citizen" to prevent the decline of wildlife which "leads inevitably to the decline in the quality of life on earth."

He said that added to the innate value of wildlife, people like wildlife and that it is part of their culture. As examples Pengelly pointed out that the early American settlers depended on wildlife for sustenance, later for sport and recreation and today also for symbols of the variety and quality of life.

He added that these feelings about wildlife draw students to the UM program.

"We get very energetic students at UM," Pengelly said, "who do a lot of volunteer work in campus and community organizations, like the International Wildlife Film Festival." Wildlife students also "eagerly" busy themselves with as much field work as possible ("since they don't have far to go to do it"), and they are active in social and political issues, especially when related to wildlife.

The correct enrollment in the UM program is 250 undergraduate and 34 graduate students. Pengelly said these students account for about one-third the number of the UM forestry school undergraduates and one-half of the graduate students in the school. In the past 40 years, the UM program has produced about 160 master's degree recipients, which Pengelly said is very good production compared with other wildlife programs in the country. The UM program awards bachelor's and master's degrees, and doctoral degrees can be earned from zoology and forestry.

Pengelly speaks with pride about the students who have graduated and gone on from the UM wildlife program, saying that many of them occupy positions of responsibility in wildlife management, teaching, federal and state agencies and private groups throughout the U.S. and many foreign countries.

(more)

Pengelly -- add two

"It's tough right now to find jobs in the wildlife biology field," Pengelly said, "but as more and more threats to the environment and animals surface, we will need more people to work to overcome them." However, he said that jobs in the profession may become more scarce due to inflationary economic conditions and the "new political conservatism."

Pengelly's career in wildlife biology grew along with the formative development of the profession, which he said began in the United States in the mid-30's from zoology, botany and forestry studies and an increasing concern for preserving the disappearing wildlife species.

In 1939, Pengelly earned a bachelor of arts degree in biology at Northern Michigan University, Marquette. He taught high school biology in Michigan schools until his interest in wildlife and the evolving management profession led him to earn a master of science degree in wildlife management in 1948 at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

He worked as a research biologist for the Idaho Fish and Game Department and taught wildlife management at the Universities of Idaho and Alaska and Utah State University. In 1961 he was awarded a doctoral degree in wildlife management from USU.

From 1954 to 1963 Pengelly worked as wildlife extension specialist for the University of Montana, traveling around the state to teach citizens about wildlife conservation and management. He transferred to the UM forestry school faculty and the UM wildlife biology program in 1963. Pengelly became the program director in 1976, when the program was assigned to the forestry school, though it is still interdisciplinary with faculty and courses from zoology, botany and forestry.

Pengelly has earned a large number of noteworthy awards which attest to his activity and influence. The most prestigious awards include the national professional conservation award presented by American Motors Company in 1967, and the Einarson award from the Northwest Section of The Wildlife Society for outstanding contributions to the wildlife profession in 1973. Well-respected among his fellow professionals, he was elected vice-president of The Wildlife Society in 1976 and served as president of the 10,000-member international organization in 1978.

(more)

Pengelly-- add three

He also is a member of several science honoraries and was appointed to a four-year term on the Montana Fish and Game Commission in 1973. He is well known as a consultant and researcher for the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps of Engineers and the Thorne Ecological Institute.

Pengelly, a native of Negaunee, Mich., married Mary E. Derleth of Marquette, Mich., in 1941. The couple has six children.

Pengelly said he likes working in a university setting because, unlike a governmental agency, he has more freedom of expression and exploration. And he's happy in Montana because there is so much wildlife to work with and much more unvalled, unpaved space to explore and live in.

###